



News Release

For immediate release: April 5, 2012

(12-039)

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Samish Bay shellfish harvest closed due to high fecal bacteria in Samish River

OLYMPIA — For the second time since March 1, state health officials temporarily closed most of Samish Bay to shellfish harvest due to high levels of fecal bacteria from the Samish River. The Department of Health has determined that when the numbers of fecal coliform bacteria are high, the bay must be closed to assure that contaminated shellfish are not marketed.

The department set March through June to determine whether 4,000 acres of Samish Bay commercial shellfish beds can return to “Approved” classification. “This is the time of year when we’ve seen the highest bacteria levels in the river,” said Jerrod Davis, director of the Office of Shellfish and Water Protection. “Significant progress has been made to reduce pollution in the watershed; however, this closure shows there’s more work to do to correct the pollution problems that have affected Samish Bay.”

With this closure and the closure that occurred on March 10-14, state health officials are unable to reclassify the area this year. The bay is currently classified as “Conditionally Approved,” because of the periodic bacteria impact that happens when the Samish River rises quickly. The area was downgraded by the agency to “Conditionally Approved” in 2011.

Skagit County, Skagit Conservation District, the Puget Sound Partnership, the Departments of Ecology and Agriculture, residents, and volunteers are continuing to identify pollution problems and get them fixed.

The [Department of Health website](http://www.doh.wa.gov) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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